

This Fraudulent Trade: Confederate Blockade-Running from Halifax During the American Civil War

Francis I.W. Jones

The day after the American Civil War began on April 12, 1861, Queen Victoria proclaimed British neutrality and three days later President Lincoln announced a naval blockade of Southern ports. In the beginning the legislature of Nova Scotia at Halifax favoured the North as did the general populace because of their inherent dislike of slavery.' As the war progressed, Halifax became a haven for Confederate agents and prominent politicians and merchants became openly supportive of the Southern cause. Despite agreement that the port developed into an entrepot for the transshipment of goods from Britain to the primary blockade-running ports of Bermuda, Nassau and Havana, and a base for the repair and refuelling of blockade-runners, the claim that Halifax became a regular base of operations for Confederate blockade-runners, has been disputed by recent scholarship.'

It has been asserted that for the first three years of the war, although blockade-runners often stopped at Halifax to refuel, none, with a single exception, "had ever used the city as a site from which to run the blockade." Only when yellow fever plagued Nassau and Bermuda in the late summer of 1864, did Halifax briefly become the focal point for blockade-running.' There is no doubt that blockade-running increased in 1864 but blockade-runners operated out of Halifax before, during and after 1864.

It has been concluded that Halifax's role was incidental because the city possessed few commodities needed by the Confederacy, and was too distant from southern ports. Although it was conceded that an unknown number of amateurs ran or attempted to run the blockade in sailing vessels early in the war; as many as fifty blockade runners or their consorts visited Halifax; and, the city was "thought to have significantly assisted the Confederate cause" in "popular and official consciousness." It was denied that Halifax played a significant role in illegally supplying the Confederacy.⁴

This essay will endeavour to assess the extent of and the reasons for Halifax's involvement in blockade-running within the context of a port in wartime caught up in a four year struggle of interrelated dichotomies: imperial interests versus mercantile profits; official policy versus public opinion; and, Confederate agents and sympathizers versus those responsible for enforcing the wishes of the British and United States governments.'

Halifax was the summer headquarters of the Royal Navy's North American and West Indian Station, where Admiral Sir Alexander Milne was appointed Commander-in-

Chief on 13 January 1860.⁶ When the war broke out, the Union Navy's interference with neutral shipping arising out of its efforts to enforce its blockade was one of the two major issues which caused friction between Britain and the US.⁷ Great Britain pursued an official policy of strict neutrality, which was largely a naval matter, practised and enforced off the coast of North America. It fell to Milne and his successor, Admiral Sir James Hope, to carry out this policy of neutrality while at the same time protecting British seaborne commerce.

A "Memorandum On Blockades For The Officers Of The Navy" issued confidentially to Milne by the Admiralty on 11 May 1861 emphasized the requirement for sufficient force and the need for public notification to neutral ships in order for a blockade to be in force. Mere declaration of a blockade without adequate naval force was not enough. In order legally to capture violators of a blockade, it had to be conclusively verified:

- 1st, That the blockade, by an adequate force on the spot, was actually in existence at the time of capture.
- 2nd, That the captured Ship knew of its being in existence; and,
- 3rd, That she knowingly and designedly endeavoured, or attempted by some outward acts to violate it, after she knew of its existence.

The Admiralty further instructed Milne on 1 June 1861 that the United States and the Confederate States were to be considered in a state of war. Both were to be allowed to visit and search British merchant ships for contraband on the high seas but, because neither side had signed the 1856 Declaration of Paris, an international agreement defining the naval rights of belligerents, they could not seize British ships or British goods which were not contraband belonging to either side. Contraband of war was to be defined by each of the belligerents and the validity of the blockade was held to be dependent on its efficiency.⁸

Milne referred to blockade-running as "this fraudulent trade" in defiance of Britain's neutrality. His policy towards what he called "these doubtful vessels" was to have as little to do with them as possible. He "was extremely annoyed with the authorities at Bermuda and the Bahamas, when they...allowed blockade-runners to use these islands as depots and bases." On 20 August 1863, for example, he expressly ordered Captain Glasse at the Bermuda Dockyard not to give coal or assistance to blockade-runners. Yet there is no evidence that he ever expressed similar pique concerning Halifax.⁹

Mortimer M. Jackson, the United States Consul in Halifax, was "a zealous and vigilant man" who conscientiously applied himself to uncovering Confederate activities in Nova Scotia and reporting them to Secretary of State William Seward and Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles. There was no doubt in Jackson's mind that Halifax had been "a naval station for vessels running the blockade." Indeed, about three-quarters of his dispatches related to blockade-runners.¹⁰

Based in part on Jackson's correspondence, Charles Francis Adams, the United States Minister to Britain, regularly complained to British Prime Minister Palmerston about blockade-runners, many of which were British-built, British-owned and commanded by British subjects. Palmerston allegedly replied laconically, "Catch'em if you can." Unfortunately for the Americans, catching them was easier said than done and deterring them was equally difficult. It has been calculated that three hundred steamers made 1300 attempts to run the blockade, and that about one thousand of these attempts were successful.

One-hundred and thirty-six blockade-runners were captured and eighty-five destroyed. The average lifetime of a blockade-runner was four runs."

Nevertheless, the risks associated with blockade-running have been exaggerated. There was little fighting and, although blockade-runners might occasionally receive a shot or two, they were rarely disabled. If caught, the penalty was confiscation of ship and cargo. According to British law, blockade-runners could not be treated as prisoners-of-war if captured. Unless the crew of a blockade-runner resisted a warship by force of arms, which was deemed to be piracy, they were free to return to their lucrative trade without any greater penalty than temporary inconvenience. The real dangers were those normally encountered by seafarers, albeit increased somewhat by the need to avoid normal navigation lanes. In short, British neutrality was ignored both because of the potential for profit and because it could be with a good deal of impunity.¹²

Blockade-running maintained a supply lifeline without which the Confederacy would not have had food, equipment, arms or ammunition. In 1864 Admiral Milne expressed the opinion that the Union believed that the war would have been over if not for blockade-running. The involvement of ships that were often built and registered in Great Britain, and not infrequently commanded and manned by British subjects, fostered false hope in the Confederacy and resentment in the Union that Great Britain secretly espoused the Confederate cause."

Although Milne and Lord Lyons, the British minister in Washington, were sensitive to the menace that blockade-runners based in Nassau and Bermuda posed to the Union, there is no record of either of them ever expressing the same concerns about Halifax. This is curious given one writer's opinion that: "The history of Halifax and Confederate blockade running is a story in itself." If Milne were confused by the practices of changing names and flags or using aliases, his confusion was limited to Halifax and not to Nassau and Bermuda.¹⁴

Although Southern steamboat captains were preferred, blockade-runners were often commanded by British civilians and furloughed RN officers motivated by profit or adventure. Two of the latter were William Nathan Wrighte Hewett and Augustus Charles Hobart-Hampden, both of whom commanded ships owned by the same company and used aliases."

In the fall of 1864, Jackson telegraphed Secretary Welles about the British blockade-runner *Condor*, which had arrived Halifax: "From Ireland via Bermuda with very large and valuable cargo. Will take on coal and doubtless proceed to Wilmington."¹⁶ Twenty days later, he reported to Seward that *Condor*, commanded by Hobart-Hampden (using the alias Samuel S. Ridge), had cleared Halifax for Wilmington "with a valuable cargo, including clothing for the Confederate Army." Hobart-Hampden also commanded the blockade-runner *Don*, crewed entirely by Englishmen. He wrote an account of his exploits under the pseudonym "Captain Roberts" in which he mentions two sojourns in Halifax. His biographer called him "a bold buccaneer of the Elizabethan period, who by some strange perverseness of fate was born into the Victorian." He was typical of the type attracted to the trade and a Southern sympathizer."

Tallahassee was typical of the changes in name and role common among such ships. *Tallahassee* was originally named *A talanta* and was purchased by the Mercantile Trading Company of England, under whose regime it made three round trips to Wilmington, North Carolina, before being purchased by the Confederate States Navy as a commerce raider. It was converted to a gunboat, renamed *Tallahassee* and put under the command of John

Taylor Wood. In August 1864, *Tallahassee* conducted a raid along the northern coast, destroying twenty-six vessels and capturing and boarding another seven before seeking refuge in Halifax to obtain coal and to replace a broken mainmast. Wood received a "very cold and uncivil reception" from Admiral Hope, who reminded him that under the terms of British neutrality, belligerents could not remain for longer than forty-eight hours. As a result, *Tallahassee* departed Halifax the night of 19 August, purportedly through the tortuous Eastern Passage, evaded any US warships which might have been lying in wait and passed into Nova Scotian folklore. After her escape, *Tallahassee* took up duties as a guard boat at Wilmington before being renamed *Olustee* and put under the command of Lieutenant William H. Ward. On 28 October the ship ran the blockade out of Old Inlet to raid commerce off the Delaware Capes, returning on 8 November. *Olustee* was renovated, converted back to a blockade-runner, and renamed *Chameleon* by John Wilkinson at Bermuda. After the Civil War the vessel was turned over to the US government, renamed *Amelia*, and sold again to become *Haya Maru*.¹⁸

Another blockade-runner was *Edith*, similar to but smaller than *Tallahassee*. This vessel was purchased by the Confederate Navy and converted into the commerce-raider *Chickamauga*. This ship allegedly visited Halifax under both names in both roles.¹⁹ But perhaps the most interesting of these dubious vessels was *Mary* (ex-Alexandra). Owned by a merchant from Liverpool, England named Henry Lafone, the ship sailed from that port for Bermuda on 17 July 1864 and arrived at St. George's on 30 August but did not enter because of the presence of yellow fever, instead diverting to Halifax. On 8 September Jackson reported to Seward that a vessel thought to be *Mary* had pursued the Union ship *Franconia* off Cape Sable. Two days later, when *Mary* arrived in Halifax, Jackson wrote to Sir Charles Tupper, provincial secretary of Nova Scotia, that he believed *Mary* had come to Halifax to be fitted out as a privateer; he also asked Tupper to take steps to prevent this. Tupper replied on 14 September that he had found no reasonable grounds for Jackson's allegations. Yet it was not until 16 September that Hope was even asked if he had any information concerning the intentions of *Mary*, a question to which he replied in the negative the next day. One cannot help but conclude that the authorities in Halifax either did not take Jackson's concerns seriously or else knew the true state of affairs but wished to ignore them.²⁰

Mary departed Halifax for Bermuda on 5 November 1864. On 30 May 1865 its master appeared in the Vice-Admiralty Court at Nassau charged with sixty-four counts of violating section seven of the Foreign Enlistment Act, which prohibited British subjects to arm or equip any ship intended to be used by one foreign power for hostilities against another. They were also banned from being "employed in the services of a Foreign Power, with intent to cruize or commit hostilities." Aboard the *Mary* were found six cases, one cask and one bale of unspecified merchandise owned by "B. Weir" and Company of Halifax. Benjamin Wier was a known confederate sympathizer and the chief Confederate agent at Halifax. Two of the cases, when opened, contained Confederate ensigns and the private effects of Lieutenant Hamilton of the Confederate Navy, including "Regulations for the Navy of the Confederate States, 1865." Nonetheless, Judge Doyle concluded in his judgement that the Crown had proved insufficient evidence of guilty intent and decreed that the ship and cargo be restored to its rightful owners.²¹

Nassau, St. George's, Havana and Halifax were all used as ports from which to run the blockade, but it was Nassau which became "an El Dorado for blockade-runners." Hobart-Hampden described Nassau: "There were rollicking captains and officers of blockade-

runners, and drunken swaggering crews; sharpers, looking out for victims; Yankee spies, and insolent worthless free...[blacks]: all these combined made a most heterogeneous, though interesting crowd." Although Nassau was "the chief centre of the trade" and the "chief storehouse for Confederate supplies," St. George's and Havana also had their advantages. Union warships were not able to cruise off St. George's as easily as Nassau because the nearest Union coaling station was seven or eight hundred miles away. Also almost all Bermudians "enthusiastically sympathized with the South...[and] devoted their total energies to helping the Southern cause." Many Cubans were also sympathetic to the Confederacy and Havana, with its large, deep harbour, had commercial links to the South. It was also close to the Gulf ports. Although British shippers favoured Nassau and Bermuda over Spanish Havana, nationality was less important than geography.²² By this criterion, Halifax was severely disadvantaged.

Nassau became the preeminent blockade-running port because of its proximity to the east coast, and more specifically to Wilmington, North Carolina, which was the only port open to the Confederacy after the Union blockade became effective. Less coal was required to make the run from Nassau than from either Bermuda, Havana or Halifax, which allowed more room for cargo. Nassau was only six hundred miles south of Wilmington, while Bermuda was seven hundred miles east and Halifax was eight hundred miles northeast. In short, Halifax was simply too far away to be a major centre of blockade-running in normal circumstances. But when yellow fever ravaged Nassau and Bermuda in the late summer of 1864, Halifax briefly became the focal point for blockade-running.²³

The author of the most recent and most definitive work on blockade-running during the Civil War has asserted that for the first three years of the Civil War, although blockade-runners often stopped at Halifax to refuel, with the single exception of *Robert E. Lee* none "had ever used the city as a site from which to run the blockade." He does admit, however, that Halifax served as an entrepot for the transshipment of supplies to Nassau, Bermuda and Havana, and as a repair and refuelling depot for blockade-runners. These functions may explain the unquestioned presence of blockade-runners and Confederate vessels in the port both before and after the summer of 1864. He cites as reasons why Halifax "never developed into a large-scale blockade-running port" the rough seas of the North Atlantic, the extra coal required for the longer voyage, and the vigilance of Jackson.²⁴

Blockade-running increased in 1864. The volume of dispatches from Jackson pertaining to blockade-runners was by far the most voluminous during that year. In August 1864, Major Norman S. Walker, the CSA Quartermaster agent at Bermuda, departed for Halifax aboard *Falcon* to establish operations, which must have included blockade-running. While the shift was necessitated because of the pandemic sweeping Bermuda and Nassau, the transfer to Halifax increased the time required for a round trip to Wilmington from two weeks to six-eight weeks. Some blockade-runners shifted their base to Halifax to along with Walker. When cooler weather returned and the yellow fever abated, most returned to Bermuda and Nassau. It would be reasonable to assume that this was why Major Walker came to Halifax: to establish temporarily the "lifeline of the Confederacy."²⁵

Harry Overholtzer, who analyzed trade between Nova Scotia and the Confederacy based on Jackson's dispatches, determined that forty-six ships made a total of eighty-five runs through the blockade to and from Halifax. Stephen Wise, on the other hand, believes that the real numbers were only fourteen ships and twenty-one runs. Wise also claims that all these runs were made between August and December 1864, with the single exception of

Robert E. Lee, which arrived in Halifax in October 1863 to sell a cargo of cotton to finance an attempt to free Confederate prisoners at Johnson Island, Ohio. One of its crew members described Halifax as "a hot Southern town...[where] they hate the Yank as bad as we do."²⁶ Still, it is important to recognize that whether one accepts Overholtzer's estimates or Wise's lower figures, Halifax was clearly not in the same league as the entrepôts further to the south.²⁷

On the other hand, *Robert E. Lee* was hardly the first blockade-runner to visit the port. As early as 26 August 1861, J.E. Vinton, who preceded Jackson as the US Consul at Halifax, reported that he had been up the past five nights watching ships he believed were preparing to run the blockade. In September 1861, five Nova Scotia ships attempted to run the blockade but were captured. On 7 September Jackson, who was now on duty, reported to Seward that *Argyle* and *Adelaide*, commanded by American captains, were flying British colours and were preparing to run the blockade from Halifax into Wilmington.²⁸

The case of the *Will-o'-the-Wisp* merits a detailed discussion because it not only implicates Halifax merchants in supplying the Confederacy prior to 1864, but is an excellent example of the nature of their participation and the practical and legal dilemmas encountered by both the Union attempting to interdict Confederate lines of supply, and Milne trying to safeguard British shipping while respecting the blockade.

Lieutenant Hunter, commanding the Union warship *Montgomery* in the Gulf of Mexico reported to Welles, on 3 June 1862 that he had seized the British schooner *Will-o'-the-Wisp* of Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, and sent her to Key West for adjudication. Observing *Will-o'-the-Wisp* on the American side of the Rio Grande off-loading barrels to a lighter, he "suspected there might be arms or powder on board from hints I had received," sent a boat to investigate and discovered gunpowder concealed in fish barrels, and bags of percussion caps.²⁹ *Will-o'-the-Wisp* had been ostensibly carrying a cargo of British manufactured goods from Halifax to sell at Matamoros, Mexico, which had become a de facto port of supply for the Confederacy because of its proximity to Brownsville, Texas.³⁰ Several voyages had been made previously from Halifax to Matamoros since the start of the War and the Rio Grande had "been officially proclaimed neutral water."³¹

Will-o'-the-Wisp was a single-decked, two-masted schooner built at Lunenburg in 1858 and registered there 28 May 1858 to William Norman Zwicker, a Lunenburg merchant.³² Early in April, 1862, Captain John Pugh and Halifax merchants Salter and Twining, chartered *Will-o'-the-Wisp* for a voyage to Matamoros placed supercargo, Captain James Griffen in charge of a cargo of British manufactured goods and ordered him to sell it at Matamoros. *Will-o'-the-Wisp* cleared Halifax 3 April with a general cargo of merchandise and presumably, although not mentioned in its clearance, thirty-seven barrels and 190 kegs of gunpowder, and 89,000 percussion caps. The Gunpowder was concealed in casks and bags marked "codfish."³³

Will-o'-the-Wisp had a fair passage to the Rio Grande River where it "anchored in the harbour below the town of Matamoros" 27 April. On 7 May *Will-o'-the-Wisp* was boarded by a boat belonging to *Montgomery*, her register endorsed, her papers examined and was given a certificate to the effect that her cargo was what it was represented to be. According to Hunter: "her manifest declared an assorted cargo of flour, fish, etc." but no contraband. The cargo was sold to "parties in Matamoros" but, because of rough weather and because lighters were scarce and many vessels were in port, *Will-o'-the-Wisp* was forced to

wait twenty days before discharging her cargo. During the delay, on May 27, Hunter claimed *Will-o'-the-Wisp* left her anchorage and was at sea for two or three days.³⁴

Twenty-seven days after first being boarded, *Montgomery* boarded *Will-o'-the-Wisp* again and made a prize of her on the reason that a portion of her cargo was gunpowder destined for the Mexican government and she was in Texan waters. Despite the remonstrations of her captain and the protestations of the British Consul at Matamoros, a prize crew was put on board and *Will-o'-the-Wisp* was sent to Key West.³⁵ The United States Consul at Matamoros reported to Seward on June 8th the discovery of gunpowder, which did not show on the manifest of the *Will-o'-the-Wisp*.³⁶

On 16 June 1862, Captain Edward Tatham, *H.M.S. Phaeton*, senior officer in the Gulf of Mexico reminded Flag-Officer Farragut, United States Navy, Commanding in the Gulf of Mexico that the rights of belligerent cease in neutral waters, and that it was "contrary to international usage" for *Montgomery* to have boarded and searched *Will-o'-the-Wisp* because it was originally anchored in Mexican waters and landing her cargo on Mexican soil. Tatham argued that *Will-o'-the-Wisp* had implicit permission to be in Texan waters. Hunter had previously allowed vessels to discharge their cargo for Matamoros in Texan waters because it was convenient for the lighters. Tatham admitted *Will-o'-the-Wisp* had powder onboard sold to the Mexican government and had moved from her original anchorage for the convenience of the lighters, but disputed Hunter's precept that "powder landed in Mexico may reach Texas" was sufficient grounds for seizing neutral property landing in a neutral port and the condemning of ship and cargo.³⁷

Salter and Twining petitioned Milne at Halifax 7 July 1862: "We beg that your excellency will take such steps in the matter as you may consider expedient."³⁸ Immediately the incident was brought to the attention of Milne, he vigorously sought redress for the parties aggrieved by "this outrage on a neutral flag, and the seizure of neutral property in neutral waters."³⁹ The day after receiving Salter and Twining's petition, Milne made inquiries to Lyons concerning *Will-o'-the-Wisp* which was purportedly engaged in lawful trade between Halifax and Matamoros.⁴⁰ Farragut forwarded Tatham's letter of 16 June to Welles 8 July but concurred with Hunter that, because *Will-o'-the-Wisp* was in Texan waters and unloading gunpowder, "there could be no doubt as to the right of capture."⁴¹

In July the Prize Court decreed that the presence of gunpowder and percussion caps aboard *Will-o'-the-Wisp* did not warrant the capture and condemnation of the vessel and her cargo because goods traded between neutral nations were not contraband of war. The Court ordered *Will-o'-the-Wisp* restored to the master and claimant; the owners were notified that the vessel and cargo were unconditionally released; and, on 25 July the New York Times reported that *Will-o'-the-Wisp* had been released and returned to its owners.⁴² On 29 July 1862, Jackson forwarded to Seward an article from the Halifax Evening Express dated 28 July which denounced the seizure of *Will-o'-the-Wisp* as a "high-handed proceeding."⁴³

The next month, Farragut replied to Tatham that, although *Will-o'-the-Wisp* being apprehended in United States waters while discharging munitions might not be sufficient grounds to condemn her, the presence of gunpowder in fish barrels instead of fish as indicated by her bill of lading was "certainly strong presumptive evidence that she was carrying on an illicit trade."⁴⁴ One cannot help but agree with Farragut, and Seward, who in a letter to Lord Russell, the British Foreign Secretary, 21 July, deemed supercargo Captain James Griffin's explanation about the gunpowder "contradictory and unsatisfactory [and] the circumstances under which it was embarked and concealed...mysterious and suspicious."⁴⁵

Did *Will-o'-the-Wisp* embark gunpowder at Halifax or was it obtained from another vessel in the Gulf of Mexico when she was at sea for two or three days after leaving her anchorage in the harbour below the town of Matamoros on 27 May?

Apparently, the experience during the summer of 1862 did not deter the vessel, or other similar craft, from continuing their efforts. On 21 July 1863, Jackson alerted Seward that *Will-o'-the-Wisp*, a fast schooner of approximately 100 tons, had cleared Halifax for Nassau but he believed it intended to run the blockade.⁴⁶

A little over a year after the *Will-o'-the-Wisp* incident, Milne, at the request of Benjamin Wier, forwarded papers to Lyons relative to the seizure of *Isabella Thompson* "under circumstances which that firm [Wier's] consider illegal." Finally, in December 1863 Rear Admiral Samuel Phillips Lee, commander of the North Atlantic Blocking Squadron, devised a blockading strategy based on runners approaching Wilmington from Bermuda, Nassau and Halifax. Either he was unusually prescient or he formed his strategy based on what had been actually occurring.⁴⁷

What had been happening was that Halifax had become "a key part of a complex commercial system which evolved around blockade-running." If it was not a major centre for blockade-running, it was a crucial point of transshipment. Goods were transhipped from large ships coming directly from Europe to vessels more suitable to running the blockade at Havana, Nassau, Bermuda and Halifax. Exports from the South followed the reverse route. Of course, not all of the ships engaged in this trade ran the blockade all of the time. Perhaps this is where some of the confusion lies. There were blockade-runners especially designed and built for the purpose and there were ships like *Will-o'-the-Wisp* which occasionally might have attempted to run the blockade to turn a quick profit. There were also ships engaged in carrying goods back and forth between ports used by other craft as starting points actually to run the blockade.⁴⁸

If blockade-running is defined as trade with the South despite the North's blockade, then Halifax was involved from the beginning to the end, albeit less frequently than Bermuda, Nassau or Havana. Blockade-runners operated out of Halifax before, during and after 1864. For example, *Druid* was stranded in Halifax by the Confederate surrender. The majority of blockade-runners operating out of Halifax were consigned to B. Wier and G.C. Harvey. Although Wier was invested heavily in blockade-runners, there is only one instance of him being named as the owner of a specific blockade-runner. *Scotia* had been captured by the Union Navy attempting to run the blockade into Charleston on 24 October 1862. It was sold at a prize court to Wier, renamed *Fanny and Jenny*, and returned to the trade until it was chased aground and destroyed by the Union Navy while attempting to run the blockade into Wilmington on 9 February 1864.⁴⁹

Did the Southern sympathies of Halifax merchants arise from trade or was trade precipitated by Southern sympathies? Perhaps the truth lies closer to Hobart-Hampden's opinion that some were motivated by profit and some by enthusiasm for the Southern cause. The Union blockade generated the opportunity for huge profits. Although partisanship sometimes played a part, blockade-running would not have existed without the potential for enormous profit. One or two voyages produced a profit; several a fortune.⁵⁰ A contemporary Haligonian remarked that "there were always adventurous men willing to run the blockade, for the sake of the money."⁵¹

And "the money" could be considerable. The captain of a blockade-runner could make as much in a month as the governor of Nassau could make in a year. Desertion was a

persistent problem on the North American and West Indies Station during the American Civil War because of the high wages paid by blockade-runners. An ordinary seaman could make twice his annual pay on one round trip. Indeed, a round trip in a blockade-runner could yield \$5000 for the captain; \$1250 for the first officer; \$750 for the second and third officers; \$2500 for the chief engineer; \$3500 for the pilot; and an average of \$250 for each crew member. And half of it was paid in advance, which lessened the risk of joining a runner.⁵²

Despite the enormous profits that could be made by crews and the merchants who invested in them, Overholtzer concluded that blockade-running was "never that brisk at Halifax," accounting for a mere two percent of trade with the US during the Civil War. Trade with the South was not a significant contributor to the prosperity of Nova Scotia but "was only enough to make Nova Scotians think it was."⁵³ It is difficult to dispute Overholtzer. This seems to be a case where perception outstripped reality in the minds of Halifaxians.

Although Halifax failed to become the blockade-running equal of Bermuda, Nassau and Havana and, with the exception of 1864, the city did not become a blockade-running port per se, whether motivated by profit, sympathy for the Confederacy, or both, Halifax and Halifaxians were enthusiastic participants in "this fraudulent trade" directly or indirectly, deliberately – in purpose-built, steam-powered ships – or opportunely – in sailing vessels – from the beginning to the end of the Civil War.

NOTES

* Frank Jones is a former Canadian naval officer and civilian senior staff officer at Canadian Naval Headquarters with an honours degree in history from Saint Mary's University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. He has read three papers before the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society and has published in *Mariner's Mirror*, *American Neptune*, *Dalhousie Review* and the *Canadian Oral History Association Journal*. Frank, is also a member of the Newfoundland Historical Society, the Trinity Historical Society and the Newfoundland and Labrador Genealogical Society.

1. Helen G. MacDonald, *Canadian Public Opinion on the American Civil War* (New York, 1974), 143. Thomas H. Raddall, *Halifax: Warden of the North* (Toronto, 1948), 193 and 196.

2. The claim that Halifax became a regular base of operations for Confederate blockade-runners was made by John Bartlet Brebner, *North Atlantic Triangle* (Toronto, 1970), 167. It has been disputed by Stephen R. Wise, *Lifeline of the Confederacy: Blockade Running During the Civil War* (Columbia, SC, 1989); Greg Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow: The Civil War and Canada's Maritime Provinces* (Montréal, 1988); and Marquis, "The Ports of Halifax and Saint John and the American Civil War," *The Northern Mariner/Le Marin du*

nord, VIII, No. 1 (January 1998), 1-19.

3. Wise, *Lifeline*, 139 and 192.

4. Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 45, 55, 245, 248 and 275; and Marquis, "Ports of Halifax and Saint John," 6, 7, 10, 14 and 15.

5. It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the multifaceted topic of diplomatic relations between Great Britain, British North America, the United States and the Confederate States except as they relate directly to blockade-running out of Halifax; the historiography is too extensive to provide an adequate bibliographic essay here. The reader is referred to the works discussed below. The definitive work on blockade-running is Wise, *Lifeline*. Robin Winks, *Canada and the United States: The Civil War Years* (New Haven, 1960), remains the authority on relations between British North America and the United States during the Civil War. Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, cited above, adds detail and contains a fresh bibliography, particularly with respect to the Maritime Provinces. Although Kenneth Bourne, *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America, 1815-1908* (Berkeley, 1967); and Brian Jenkins, *Britain and the War for the Union* (2 vols., Montréal, 1974 and 1980), locate the Civil War years in the broader

context of Anglo-American relations, both under-rate the role of British North America. Jenkins, however, is worthwhile consulting for its excellent bibliographical essay. Frank J. Merli, *Great Britain and the Confederate Navy, 1861-1865* (Bloomington, 1970), does examine the issue of the building of Confederate ships, including blockade-runners, in Britain, but does not mention specifically Halifax or Nova Scotia. The British Sessional Papers and the Admiralty Papers cited below are two oft-ignored primary sources.

6. Canada, Office of the Naval Historian, *Flag Officers and Senior Naval Officers Responsible for the Halifax Station* (Ottawa, 1959), 71.
7. D.P. Crook, *Diplomacy during the American Civil War* (New York, 1975), 127. The other point of contention was the efforts of the Confederacy to acquire vessels from British shipbuilders.
8. Great Britain, Public Record Office (PRO), Admiralty (ADM) 1, vol. 5759, 350; ADM 128, vol. 56, 239-244 and vol. 61, 531 ff; and Regis A. Courtemanche, *No Need of Glory: The British Navy in American Waters, 1860-1864* (Annapolis, 1977), 13-14.
9. PRO, ADM 128, "Station Records, North American and West Indian. Correspondence Arising out of the Civil War," vol. 60, 991-1001; and Courtemanche, *No Need of Glory*, 100 and 111.
10. Raddall, *Halifax*, 201; Franklin H. Irwin, Jr., "Our Spy in Nova Scotia," *Foreign Service Journal* (June 1981), 38; and Harry Andrew Overholtzer, "Nova Scotia and the United States' Civil War" (Unpublished MA Thesis, Dalhousie University, 1965), 59.
11. Courtemanche, *No Need of Glory*, 96; and Wise, *Lifeline*, 221.
12. Mark E. Neeley, Jr., "The Perils of Running the Blockade: The Influence of International Law in an Era of Total War," *Civil War History*, XXXII (1986), 105-107; and Courtemanche, *No Need of Glory*, 101.
13. Wise, *Lifeline*, 226; and PRO, ADM 128, vol. 60,991-1001.
14. Courtemanche, *No Need of Glory*, 93-96; and Overholtzer, "Nova Scotia," 55 and 59. Twelve of the forty-six vessels identified as blockade-runners by Jackson were not recognized by Wise. One was listed by Wise under a different name; three others, all schooners, were catalogued by Marcus W. Price, "Masters and Pilots Who Tested the Blockade of the Confederate Ports, 1861-1865," *American Neptune*, XXI (1961), 81-106. The 17.4% discrepancy can be attributed to Jackson's overzealousness, Wise's narrow definition of blockade-runners, and the confusion caused by not uncommon name changes.
15. Wise, *Lifeline*, 109 and 354, points out that "there has been confusion" concerning Hewett and Hobart-Hampden. Both were former British naval officers; both used aliases; and both commanded blockade-runners owned by the same company.
16. Dave Horner, *The Blockade-Runners* (New York, 1968), 54.
17. *Ibid.*, 57; Captain Roberts [Charles Augustus Hobart-Hampden], *Never Caught* (2 vols., Carolina Beach, NC, 1967), II, 49-51; Stanley Lane-Poole, "Hobart-Hampden," *Dictionary of National Biography* (1938), XXVII, 36; and Virgil Carrington Jones, *The Civil War At Sea* (3 vols., New York, 1960), III, 279-280.
18. David Flemming, "Tallahassee Revisited" (Unpublished paper presented to the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society, 1989), 3 and 5-7. Until recently, it was believed unequivocally that *Tallahassee* had escaped through the Eastern Passage. But Flemming points out that the only written source was a memoir of John Taylor Wood, *Tallahassee's* captain, written twenty-five years after the event. Contemporary Halifax newspapers do not mention what would have been an exceptional and sensational act of navigation. See also Raddall, *Halifax*, 202-203; Arthur Thurston, *Tallahassee Skipper* (Yarmouth, NS, 1981), 210, 246-248 and 376; and Wise, *Lifeline*, 155, 201-202, 209 and 289.
19. Wise, *Lifeline*, 199; Overholtzer, "Nova Scotia," 71; and Thurston, *Tallahassee Skipper*, 275.
20. PRO, ADM 128, vol. 61, 701-703, 705-707 and 735ff.; and Public Archives of Nova Scotia (PANS), "Despatches from the United States Consuls in Halifax, NS," Jackson to Seward, 8 September 1864.
21. PRO, ADM 128, vol. 61, 735ff.
22. Horner, *Blockade-Runners*, 102 and 185-186;

Roberts, *Never Caught*, 19; Courtemanche, *No Need of Glory*, 92; and Wise, *Lifeline*, 76, 95 and 167.

23. Wise, *Lifeline*, 63-64 and 192; and Thurston, *Tallahassee Skipper*, 210

24. Wise, *Lifeline*, 139 and 192.

25. Overholtzer, "Nova Scotia," 64; Gerard S. Walker to Francis I.W. Jones, re: Major Norman S. Walker, 25 April 1992 (in possession of the author); and Wise, *Lifeline*, 134, 147 and 191-192.

26. *Halifax Sun*, 16 December 1863.

27. Overholtzer, "Nova Scotia," 71; Wise, *Lifeline*, 139 and 233-283; and *Halifax Sun*, 16 December 1863.

28. PANS, "Despatches," Vinton to [illegible], 26 August 1861; and Jackson to Seward, 7 September 1861; *Morning Chronicle* (Halifax), 19 and 28 September 1861; PRO, ADM 128, vol. 59, 703-704.

29. Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies, Series 1, vol. XVIII, 525-526, Hunter to Welles, 3 June 1862.

30. Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 52.

31. *Evening Express*, 28 July 1862.

32. Dalhousie University Archives, Lunenburg, NS Shipping Register, 28 July 1858. Marquis, "Ports of Halifax and Saint John," 6, mistakenly identified *Will-o'-the-Wisp* as a "Yarmouth vessel." The Lunenburg schooner *Will-o'-the-Wisp* should not be confused with the iron paddlewheel steamer *Will of the Wisp*, which ran the blockade successfully twelve times between November 1863 and 9 February 1865, when it ran aground in the Gulf of Mexico and was destroyed while attempting to reach Galveston, Texas.

33. *Evening Express*, 28 July 1862; Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 52; Marquis, "Ports of Halifax and Saint John," 6; and Great Britain, House of Commons, Sessional Papers, 1863, LXXII, 215, 521 and 525, Correspondence Respecting the Seizure of the British Schooner "Will-o'-the-Wisp" by the United States ship of war "Montgomery" at Matamoros, 3 June 1862 (*Will-o'-the-Wisp* Correspondence). The page reference given is the page number within the volume of the

year of the British Sessional Papers held by Dalhousie University on microcard. It does not refer to the internal page number of the cited document. A superlative guide to original sources in the British Sessional Papers is: Robert Huhn. Jones, "The American Civil War in the British Sessional Papers: Catalogue and Commentary," *American Philosophical Society Proceedings*, CVII (1963), 415-426.

34. *Evening Express*, 28 July 1862; Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies, Series 1, vol. XVIII, 525-526, Hunter to Welles, 3 June 1862; and Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 52.

35. *Evening Express*, 28 July 1862.

36. PRO, ADM 128, vol. 59, 853-855.

37. Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies, Series 1, vol. XVIII, 527, Tatham to Farragut, 16 June 1862.

38. *Will-o'-the-Wisp* Correspondence, 517.

39. *Evening Express*, 28 July 1862.

40. PRO, ADM 128, vol. 59, 817-820.

41. Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies, Series 1, vol. XVIII, 526-527, Farragut to Welles, 8 July 1862.

42. *Will-o'-the-Wisp* Correspondence, 523-524; and *Evening Express*, 28 July 1862.

43. *Despatches from the United States Consuls in Halifax, N.S.*, Jackson to Seward, 29 July 1862. The *Halifax Morning Sun* printed an almost identical account, 29 July 1862.

44. Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies, Series 1, vol. XVIII, 528, Farragut to Tatham, August 1862.

45. *Will-o'-the-Wisp* Correspondence, 518.

46. *Despatches from the United States Consuls in Halifax, N.S.*, Jackson to Seward, 21 July 1863.

47. Virginia Jeans Laas, "'Sleepless Sentinels:' The North Atlantic Blockading Squadron, 1862-1864," *Civil War History*, XXXI (1985), 31.

48. Overholtzer, "Nova Scotia," 58; and Wise,

Lifeline, 58.

49. Thurston, *Tallahassee Skipper*, 276; PANS, "Despatches," Jackson to Seward, 30 August 1864; Wise, *Lifeline*, 299 and 320; and Stephen R. Wise, "Lifeline of the Confederacy: Blockade Running During the American Civil War" (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of South Carolina, 1983), 561 and 613.

50. Marquis, *In Armageddon's Shadow*, 53; and Marquis, "Ports of Halifax and Saint John," 6.

51. Roberts, *Never Caught*, 19; Raddall, *Halifax*, 197; Wise, *Lifeline*, 107; and George Johnson, "The Trent Affair," *Collections of the Nova Scotia Historical Society*, XVI (1912), 45.

52. Roberts, *Never Caught*, 2 and 19-20; Courtemanche, *No Need of Glory*, 133; and Wise, *Lifeline*, 111

53. Overholzer, "Nova Scotia," 54, 66 and 71.